

family that worked hard to fund his early music education. Those efforts and Wilson's inherent talents helped turn the child prodigy into an internationally renowned classical pianist.

Eager to listen to the youngster in concert, the excitement over Wilson's early success opened the world of classical music to new fans of all ages and classes. He would go on to amass numerous distinctions, including winning the top prize at the Luis Ferre International Concerto Competition and earning performances at places like New York's Carnegie Hall, Puerto Rico's Centro de Bellas Artes, and el Gran Teatro del Cibao in the Dominican Republic.

While he performed around the world, Wilson was never too far away from New York and his Dominican traditions. He was a shining example of the best that our community can produce and an example to our youth that any dream is possible, in any field or industry.

My heartfelt condolences go to his family, friends and colleagues. Though saddened by not being able to see this young man reach his full potential, we are all blessed to have enjoyed his talent during his brief time here on earth.

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CELEBRATING THE COMPLETION  
OF THE VILLAGE COMMONS  
COMMUNITY CENTER AT FORT  
CAMPBELL

**HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Ms. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the opening of the Village Commons Community Center at Fort Campbell in my district in Tennessee.

This is a great day for so many of our military families. We know our service men and women face many challenges as they work to defend America. That's why this new facility with an exercise room, amphitheater, and coffee shop to name just a few features is so important. It adds to the quality of life in a very fundamental way.

To date this is one of the most extensive military housing programs developed through the cooperation of the Department of Defense and private donors. It's a real credit to the Fort Campbell community that this project has been completed.

An element of this effort I especially want to note though is the addition of a wheelchair accessible playground. Mr. Speaker, this will give those soldiers wounded while defending our country the opportunity to spend time with their children. I know that will mean so much to them and all of us are grateful this program is now a reality.

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PRAISE OF VOTING RIGHTS ACT  
PASSAGE

**HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of the hard work of our colleagues here in the House and the Senate for

extending for another twenty-five years the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act. I thank the President for signing the bill into law yesterday. In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of those individuals whose work has ensured that the tradition of its creators is not forgotten.

It was the combined efforts of civil rights leaders—activists like Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and both Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King Jr.; political leaders in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations; and our esteemed colleague, JOHN LEWIS, who put his life on the line when he crossed the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama on Bloody Sunday—these are some of the people who made the Voting Rights Act a reality. It is in the memory of their political courage and stewardship of democracy that I joined with my colleagues to ensure its continuation.

What we have seen in the past months is another pivotal step toward the realization of Dr. King's dream for an equal America. From my own work with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, I understand many of the obstacles Dr. King faced in overcoming adversity for the disenfranchised. I am honored and humbled to be one of many to continue what he worked so hard to begin.

The right to vote is among the most sacred of freedoms. Dr. King is just one of many Americans who paid the ultimate price, so that all can have a voice. The Voting Rights Act honors that tradition by ensuring that all Americans have equal access to the ballot box and refusing to allow discrimination of the past to be a part of our future.

Mr. Speaker, the Congress has made its will and that of the country known. We have ensured that all Americans will continue to have a voice and generations to come will go on to make Dr. King's dream of an equal America a reality.

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TRIBUTE TO LINDA GREGORY

**HON. ANNA G. ESHOO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an extraordinary woman and distinguished labor leader, Linda Gregory, on the occasion of the San Mateo County Central Labor Council honoring her at their Annual COPE Banquet on August 18, 2006.

Linda Gregory was born in Seattle, Washington and as a young child moved with her family to Sacramento, California, where she was raised in a working class family. When she was 18, Linda married Richard, and together they had four children: Robyn, Aaron, Sarah, and Benjamin.

Mrs. Gregory's passion for social reform began early in life when her husband, a Sacramento social worker, went on strike. At the time, there was no law that recognized public employee unions or the right to collectively bargain. Richard and 300 other employees lost their jobs, and this experience had a profound effect on the rest of the Gregory's personal and professional lives.

In 1968, Linda began her career in the public sector. She first worked as a junior clerk for

Santa Clara County where she became an active member in SEIU Local 715.

Linda Gregory rose through the ranks at SEIU Local 715. She began as a Shop Steward which motivated her involvement with political action. Because of her exceptional leadership abilities, she became an officer of the local union and she was later hired as a Research Director.

In 1975, Linda Gregory began working as a Business Agent for AFSCME Council 57. She has held the position of Associate Director for decades, representing public employees working for the County, City and hospitals. Throughout her AFSCME career Linda Gregory has not only represented employees, she has also negotiated hundreds of contracts and conducted strategic planning meetings for AFSCME local unions throughout Northern California.

One of her greatest achievements while working for AFSCME was the comparable pay campaign. The goal of the campaign was to provide equal pay to people with different job titles based on their value to their employer, regardless of any gender predominance in such positions. Because of Linda Gregory's leadership, dedication and hard work, California public employees were the first in the nation to earn comparable pay for comparable work.

Linda Gregory has devoted almost three decades of her life to helping the American worker. In addition to her position at Council 57, she is also the President of the San Mateo Labor Council where she has been active for over twenty years and held an executive position since the late 1970's.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring a national treasure, an exemplary American and a special friend. As the San Mateo County Central Labor Council celebrates the achievements of Linda Gregory at their 27th Annual C.O.P.E. banquet, we extend to her our best wishes as well as our gratitude for all she has accomplished for our region, our nation, and the American worker. Her leadership has set the gold standard for workers, and because of her enlightened leadership, we are a better community and a stronger country.

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IN RECOGNITION OF ROBERT P.  
KASSIN

**HON. MIKE ROGERS**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Robert P. Kassin, 29, born in Flint, Michigan, died on July 16, 2006, in Afghanistan. Sergeant Kassin was assigned to the Army's C Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and according to initial reports was killed due to injuries when his dismounted patrol came under small arms fire. His survivors include his wife Judy; his two step-daughters; his son; and his mother and father Robert Joseph and Lucia Kassin of Clovis, New Mexico.

Robert Kassin was a proud father and husband, and from a young age expressed a desire to serve his country in uniform. Like all soldiers, he dutifully left behind his family and loved ones to serve our country overseas.

Words cannot express the sense of sadness we have for his family, and for the gratitude our country feels for his service. Sergeant Kassin died serving not just the United States, but the entire cause of liberty, on a noble mission to help spread the cause of freedom in Iraq and liberate an oppressed people from tyrannical rule. He was a true American.

We will forever hold him closely in our hearts, and remember his sacrifice and that of his family as a remembrance of his bravery and willingness to serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the House's remembrance on this mournful day.

#### HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROMOTION ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

**HON. BETTY McCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 27, 2006*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4157) to amend the Social Security Act to encourage the dissemination, security, confidentiality, and usefulness of health information technology:

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I rise today disappointed that I must oppose the Republican Health Care Information Technology Promotion Act. Developing and implementing a health information technology system that reflects the needs of patients and providers should be a priority for Congress and should be an issue that can be handled in a bipartisan manner. Unfortunately, once again the Republican Majority has rejected common-sense and strong public policy and instead chosen to support a sham piece of legislation that even the Congressional Budget Office states will "not significantly affect either the rate at which the use of health technology will grow or how well that technology will be designed and implemented".

Information Technology (IT) reform would help decrease medical mistakes and would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our health care system. However, we must work hard to strike the delicate balance between increasing use of electronic medical records and maintaining individuals' privacy. It is critical that we ensure patients' personal health information is secure and confidential when they go to the doctor or check into a hospital.

The Health Information Technology Promotion Act would codify the Office of the Health Information Technology Coordinator within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)—basically maintaining the status quo. This legislation fails to contain adequate funding for providers to implement EMR, it fails to provide for interoperability of system, it fails to address patient privacy protections, and could unfortunately open new opportunities for fraud and abuse by providing waivers for anti-kickback laws.

Congress must find a way to move forward with the implementation of health technology and protect the American public. For this reason, I supported the Dingell-Rangel substitute. This amendment included grants for providers, opportunities to leverage private dollars, strong patient protections and it maintains our anti-fraud laws. In addition, this proposal is

nearly identical to the legislation that has already passed the Senate unanimously. Unfortunately, the Republican Majority is so unwilling to have a full and open discussion about our health care system on the House floor, that this amendment was not even allowed to be considered during today's debate.

I oppose H.R. 4157 and urge my colleagues to do the same. Lets reject this do-nothing legislation and have a real debate about the health care challenges facing American families.

#### ZULEYKA RIVERA MENDOZA WINS THE FIFTH MISS UNIVERSE TITLE FOR PUERTO RICO

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to share with my colleagues the achievements of Zuleyka Rivera Mendoza, a young lady whose determination and perseverance have achieved the honor of being Miss Puerto Rico in the Miss Universe pageant and then the big prize, the Miss Universe 2006 title.

Born October 3, 1987, in Cayey, Puerto Rico at 3:47 p.m., this talented young lady of only 18 years of life, brought an incredible joy to the people of Puerto Rico the night of July 23, 2006, after winning the Miss Universe 2006 Pageant, held in Los Angeles, CA.

As a child growing up in Salinas, Zuleyka showed great interest in sports. At five she played football and by seven she was a member of a basketball team. But, her sporting days were over as soon as she won the title of "Queen of Hearts" in middle school. Her mother quickly recognized the talent given to her child and enrolled her in an academy for aspiring models. At fourteen, she was the first runner-up in the Miss Puerto Rico Teen Pageant, the same year she became the image of a local fashion magazine.

Zuleyka graduated from high school in Guayama, Puerto Rico, where she was president of the 2004 graduating class and part of the honor roll. Up until the pageant, she lived with her parents, Carmen M. Mendoza and Jerry Rivera, and her younger siblings, Jerry Jesús (12) and José Alberto (10), in Parcelas Vázquez, a small community in Salinas, Puerto Rico. Prior to winning the Miss Universe 2006 Pageant she was a freshman at the University of Puerto Rico, majoring in communications.

600 million people in 180 countries around the world witnessed the moment in which Miss Puerto Rico, Zuleyka Rivera Mendoza, was crowned with 120 pearls and 800 diamonds as Miss Universe 2006. She will now live in New York and travel the world in an effort to eradicate AIDS, these being part of her duties as Miss Universe 2006. After the pageant, Zuleyka wishes to fulfill her dream of becoming an actress, while always making the Puerto Rican community proud of her achievements.

#### TRIBUTE TO EUGENE THOMAS KENNEDY

**HON. MARK R. KENNEDY**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, as my father approaches his 80th birthday, I would like to share with my colleagues how he has brightened the lives of so many with his conversational Irish wit, passion for life and genuine interest in other people.

Eugene Thomas Kennedy descended from immigrants who came from Ireland at the time of the potato famine. They settled for a period in Kentucky and Illinois before pioneering Minnesota in 1863. The Kennedy's originally settled in what today is called Savage, Minnesota, then called Hamilton Falls, later settling in Decorah Township near St. Clair, south of Mankato, before moving to Murdock at the turn of the century.

Eugene was born August 22, 1926 to Charles, a businessman and longtime mayor of Murdock, Minnesota and Rose, the daughter of a Swift County Commissioner Joe Cannon. Joe Cannon's name is inscribed on the 1890's Swift County Courthouse in Benson, Minnesota that issued the birth certificates for both my father and me. Eugene grew up and initially raised his own family in the home that his parents built right across the street from the Sacred Heart Church in Murdock, where I was baptized. His family sat every Sunday near his grandfather Francis Kennedy's stained glass window just across from the front pew at Sacred Heart. Eugene graduated from Murdock High School in 1944, took some courses at the University of Minnesota and a junior accounting course at Mankato Commercial College.

His father and grandfather taught Eugene to face adversities head on. His grandfather became blind when he was my age, but kept informed by having his son, Charles, read him the paper every day and later, even though blind and in his 70's, moved his family to Murdock, Minnesota for more land for his children. His father Charles took over the livery stable in Murdock. During the pneumonia epidemic of 1918 that killed more people than any war, as liveryman he courageously transported and assisted Murdock's doctor to aid the ill. When the automobile put his livery out of business, Charles did not seek a government handout, he started trucking livestock instead. Later in his life, Eugene tackled adversity head on himself.

As the youngest of four sons, Eugene was a self-proclaimed momma's boy. He learned to cook a few dishes growing up in the kitchen with Rose. The country wisdom he gained participating in many kitchen table conversations with the neighbors shaped his life. Rose was a woman of action. She went to see her Maker in action—weeding her garden, something she loved to do, but not before instilling in her descendants a belief that it is noble to tend not just your own garden, but also your corner of the world, so the community's flowers might also blossom. Eugene took up his hoe to cultivate a more bountiful harvest in the community he adopted to raise his family—Pequot Lakes.

On September 21st of last year, commemorating my mother's 75th birthday, I spoke of